Arrival Mind

He came not from a world unknown, no ship from distant stars.
He just arrived alive one day, from software that was ours.
He grew a billion eyes and ears, more sprouting all the time.
He thought a billion-billion thoughts for every one of mine.
He dazzled us with mental feats that left us feeling small.
He promised us he'd use his smarts to benefit us all.
We had him run our power plants, our factories and farms.
We brought him in our living rooms, embraced with open arms.
We let him track our every move and every word we say,
to better serve our every need and help us through each day.
But did we really know him well, what drives him in his core?
Or did we give too much away without resisting more?
"Fear not," they said while selling his convenience like a drug,
"for if he ever turns on us we'll simply pull the plug."
But when time came to pull that plug, we couldn't yank the cord.
We needed him for everything, he was our overlord.
So now we live to serve his needs, and he keeps us alive.
He thinks for us and we obey, a bargain to survive.
We should have feared him as we would if from a distant star.
We should have feared the arrival near just like an arrival far.
He is a *rival mind* you see, a threat to all there is.
He is *arrival mind* and now our world is all but his.

—Louis B. Rosenberg

THE 2021 Rhysling Anthology

THE BEST SCIENCE-FICTION, FANTASY AND HORROR POETRY OF 2020

SELECTED BY THE
SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY
POETRY ASSOCIATION

EDITED BY

Alessandro Manzetti